

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P18/S2664/FUL</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL APPLICATION
<b>REGISTERED</b>	3.9.2018
<b>PARISH</b>	WARBOROUGH
<b>WARD MEMBERS</b>	Felix Bloomfield Sue Cooper
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Soha Housing Ltd
<b>SITE</b>	St Lawrence House, St Lawrence Close, Warborough, Wallingford, OX10 7EY
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Demolish 15 flats/bedsits and erect 12 flats with associated parking and landscaping.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	As clarified by additional information from Agent received 23 October 2018 and 10 January 2019
<b>OFFICER</b>	Emma Bowerman

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee as the officer's recommendation conflicts with the views of Warborough Parish Council.
- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) contains an L-shaped building which was constructed in the early 1970's. The building accommodates 15 flats / bedsits and these are managed and maintained by Soha Housing.
- 1.3 The building is located at the end of a cul-de-sac in a residential area. There are neighbouring properties on all sides of the site. There is a communal garden to the rear of the building and flat roofed garages / parking bays to the front.
- 1.4 The site is within Oxford Green Belt. The north and east boundaries boarder Warborough Conservation Area. Warborough and Shillingford have a made Neighbourhood Plan and the site is within the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

2.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 This application seeks full planning permission to demolish the existing block of flats to provide 12 new apartments. The existing vehicular access from St Lawrence Close would be maintained. The existing flat roofed garages would be replaced by a parking courtyard.
- 2.2 The development would provide 6 x one-bed units and 6 x two-bed units. The proposed external materials are brick walls and a plain tiled roof.
- 2.3 Additional information was submitted during the application process to clarify the extent of the highway boundary.
- 2.4 The application plans are **attached** as Appendix B. The application is accompanied by supporting documents, including a Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement. These are available to view on the council's website at:  
<http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P18/S2664/FUL>

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 **Warborough Parish Council** - Objects on the basis that the development would not conform with a number of Neighbourhood Plan Policies, in relation to:

- Design and the impact on the conservation area
- The level of parking provision
- That it has not been demonstrated that the housing stock benefits will outweigh the reduction in units
- Soha Housing have not given binding commitment that the units will continue to be let as social housing
- The applicant has not provided a clear statement confirming how the new development will provide a significant improvement in the quality of the existing stock for the current residents.

3.2 **Warborough and Shillingford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee** – Recommend that the application is refused based on the following objections:

- The reduction in affordable units, that the facility would fail to meet current housing need and there is no confirmation that the units will be rented.
- The proposal fails to preserve or enhance local character and the removal of the hedge would erode the rural character of the community.
- The bin and cycle storage would be unacceptable.
- The development would not incorporate enough parking spaces.

Also commented that:

- An independent assessment of the environmental damage vs the benefits would have been useful.
- The plan does not clearly show how each property has access to external areas.
- Holistic approaches have not been considered, such as co-ordination with other development sites in the village.
- Reasonable plans for remaining residents to remain locally should be made.

3.3 **Oxfordshire County Council Highways** – No objection subject to conditions

3.4 **Housing Development** – Support the application in full

3.5 **Conservation Officer** - No objection as the application is in line with local and national policy for development in the setting of the conservation area.

3.6 **Forestry Officer** – No objection

3.7 **Countryside Officer** – No objection

3.8 **Waste Management Officer** - Provided general information on bin requirements

3.9 **Neighbour Representations** – Four received in total

Two received from residents of St Lawrence House. One commented that “*this is a fantastic plan*” and one raises objections to the development as “*the flat is in excellent condition*” and “*this is a completely needless application to demolish a perfectly good building.*”

Two received from residents of surrounding properties. One questions whether the development would result in any changes to neighbouring gardens and asks what the boundary will be. The other raises concerns about the impact of moving on an existing resident of St Lawrence House and comments that *“the flats are quite adequate”* and that it would be *“a total waste of money to demolish them.”*

**4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 None

**5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE**

**5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Updated in July 2018 and the associated NPPF Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

**5.2 Adopted South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) 2027**

CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSS1 - The Overall Strategy

CSR1 - Housing in villages

CSH2 - Housing density

CSH3 - Affordable housing

CSH4 - Meeting housing needs

CSI1 - Infrastructure provision

CSM2 - Transport Assessments and Travel Plans

CSQ3 - Design

CSEN2 - Green Belt

CSEN3 - Historic environment

CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

**5.3 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2011 saved policies**

C6 - Maintain & enhance biodiversity

C8 - Adverse affect on protected species

C9 - Loss of landscape features

CON5 - Setting of listed building

CON7 - Proposals in a conservation area

D1 - Principles of good design

D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles

D3 - Outdoor amenity area

D4 - Reasonable level of privacy for occupiers

D6 - Community safety

D10 - Waste Management

EP1 - Adverse affect on people and environment

EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration

EP4 - Impact on water resources

EP6 - Sustainable drainage

EP8 - Contaminated land

G2 - Protect district from adverse development

G5 - Best use of land/buildings in built up areas

GB4 - Visual amenity of the Green Belt

H4 - Housing sites in towns and villages

T1 - Safe, convenient and adequate highway network for all users

T2 - Unloading, turning and parking for all highway users

**5.4 Warborough and Shillingford Neighbourhood Plan (W&SNP)**

The W&SNP was formally made part of the council's development plan on 11 October 2018. This follows the positive outcome of the referendum, where 90.4% of those who

voted were in favour of the Plan. The key policies in the W&SNP that relate to this development are:

VC1 – Development principles and the character of the villages

H1 – Housing mix

H3 – Infill development

H5 – Parking provision

H6 – Safeguarding Affordable housing

#### 5.5 **Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2032**

The Council is preparing a new Local Plan, which will set out how development will be planned and delivered across South Oxfordshire to 2033. Due to the stage of preparation, the Emerging Plan can only be given limited weight.

#### 5.6 **South Oxfordshire Design Guide (SODG) 2016**

This guide sets out the standard that we expect developments to meet through a series of checklists that relate to key design principles.

#### 6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The relevant planning considerations in the determination of this application are:

- The principle of the development, including:
  - whether the proposal is appropriate development within the Green Belt,
  - impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
  
- Matters of detail / technical issues:
  - the reduction in the number of affordable units,
  - impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area,
  - neighbour amenity,
  - traffic impact and highway safety,
  - trees and ecology,
  
- Other matters

#### **The principle of the development**

6.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.3 In the case of South Oxfordshire, the Development Plan consists of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) which was adopted in December 2012, and the saved policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2011.

6.4 The Warborough and Shillingford Neighbourhood Plan (W&SNP) also forms part of the Development Plan and was formally “made” in October 2018. Development which is not in accordance with an up-to-date Development Plan should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.5 In terms of the overall principle of the development, the site is within the built-up limits of Warborough. Policy VC1 of the W&SNP supports the principle of new residential development within the built-up areas of the village subject to a number of amenity and environmental considerations.

6.6 Warborough is classified as a ‘smaller village’ in the SOCS. Policy CSR1 of the SOCS states that *redevelopment proposals in all categories of settlement may be acceptable*

*but will be considered on a case by case basis through the development management process in line with other policies in the Development Plan. As the site is within the Green Belt, the compliance with Green Belt Policy is key to these considerations.*

Whether the proposal is appropriate development within the Green Belt

- 6.7 Policy CSEN2 of the SOCS sets out how the special character and landscape setting of Oxford will be protected by the Oxford Green Belt. In relation to housing in Green Belt villages, this policy adds that *Policy CSR1 allows for limited amounts of new housing through infilling in some Green Belt villages however planning permission will not be granted for development within the Oxford Green Belt that is contrary to national policy guidance in the NPPF and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.*
- 6.8 Para.133 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) explains that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of the Green Belt are their openness and their permanence.
- 6.9 The NPPF goes on to explain that the Green Belt serves the following five purposes:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
  - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 6.10 At para.145, the NPPF stipulates that *a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt unless the development falls within a list of exceptions to this. Included in this list is:*
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use, which would:*
- *not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
  - *not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*
- 6.11 This proposal would involve the demolition of an existing building and its replacement with a new building and is clearly falls within the category of 'redevelopment'. The proposal is therefore an appropriate development within the Green Belt, and in my opinion would not conflict with any of the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Subject to the impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt, the principle of the development is acceptable.

Impact on the openness of the Green Belt

- 6.12 If there was no building on the site, the site would be appropriate for infill development. Therefore, whilst the NPPF allows for the replacement of existing buildings providing that they are not materially larger than the one that is being replaced, this is also an infill site, for which there is no prescribed limit on the size or volume of buildings.
- 6.13 The proposed building would have a similar footprint to the existing and would be 1.5m higher. The development would include the demolition of the garages and the land where these are positioned would be used for parking and would remain open. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.
- 6.14 In my opinion the development would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt and complies with the relevant development plan policies and NPPF guidance in relation to development in the Green Belt. The principle of the development is therefore acceptable.

**Matters of detail / technical issues**

The reduction in the number of affordable units

- 6.15 Policy H6 of the W&SNP seeks to safeguard affordable housing. This policy states:
- Proposals that would result in the loss of existing affordable housing through either redevelopment or change of use will not be supported unless:*
- A. They would result in an increase in the number of affordable houses or a significant improvement in the quality of the existing stock of affordable housing on the site; or*
  - B. the affordable houses to be lost are replaced elsewhere in the neighbourhood area; or*
  - C. it can be demonstrated that the affordable houses concerned are no longer needed in the neighbourhood area*
- 6.16 The site is operated by Soha Housing Ltd, who are a registered housing association. The documents submitted with the application state that Soha Housing Ltd will continue to retain the site as part of their affordable housing stock.
- 6.17 There is a restrictive covenant on the site which requires the written consent of the council if the site is redeveloped for private housing. As such, the council has control over the future occupancy of the proposed flats and Soha Housing Ltd could not use the site for private units without the prior consent of the council.
- 6.18 The Nationally Described Space Standards for one bed flats is 50 sq.m. The existing bedsits are significantly below this standard, at 31 sq.m. The development would therefore provide future occupiers with places to live that are more appropriate for modern day standards, with separate spaces for living and sleeping.

- 6.19 The documents accompanying the application explain that the accommodation was originally designed and built in the early 1970s, and the methods of construction, thermal performance and insulation, heating systems, internal layouts and facilities are now outdated and incapable of economically viable refurbishments to current standards.
- 6.20 I am satisfied that the proposal would bring these affordable units up to modern standards and provide future residents with an improved living environment. Although the development would reduce the number of affordable units, in my opinion the development would result in a significant improvement in the quality of the housing stock and this would benefit those in housing need.

Impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area

- 6.21 Policy VC1 of the W&SNP provides several criteria in relation to character and appearance. This policy specifically references the importance of preserving or enhancing Warborough Conservation Area for its important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place. The requirements of policies CSEN3 of the SOCS and CON7 of the SOLP have similar requirements.
- 6.22 Although not within Warborough Conservation Area the site does border this designated area and so the development of the site would have some impact on the setting of the conservation area. The existing building is not of architectural or historic merit and so I have no objection to its demolition.
- 6.23 The proposed replacement building has a higher ridge height than the existing building, of roughly around 1.5m. The roof of the existing block can be glimpsed from Thame Road (which is part of the conservation area) between trees and existing buildings. The proposed development would retain this character, with glimpses of the new roof possible. There are no historic designated views that the slightly increased roofline would impact and as such, I have no objection to the proposed replacement building with regard to the impact on the setting of the conservation area.
- 6.24 The council's conservation officer has raised no objection to the development and is satisfied that the application is in line with local and national policy for development in the setting of a conservation area. Materials appropriate to local character can be secured by condition.
- 6.25 The overall form and layout of the proposed building would not be dissimilar to the existing. The design proposed would incorporate some additional gable features, which would create some visual interest and break up the building. The scale of the building would be appropriate to the scale of the plot and I am satisfied that the proposals would not detract from the character and appearance of the site or surrounding area, in accordance with relevant design policies.

Neighbour amenity

- 6.26 A number of Development Plan policies seek to protect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. This includes policy H3 of the W&SNP, which requires development within the built-up form of the village to not cause an unacceptable impact on the amenities of adjacent residential properties.
- 6.27 Given the similarities between the existing building on the site and the proposed development, I do not consider that the proposal would have a materially greater impact on the amenities of surrounding residential properties. The existing building has a

gable end close to the nearest neighbour at No.16 St. Lawrence Close and a positive aspect of the development is that the roof line of the proposed building would be hipped away from this neighbour.

- 6.28 The application plans show half height obscured glazing on the northern elevation of the proposed building and this would improve the relationship between the application site and the properties to the north. A condition would ensure that the obscure glazing is retained. Subject to this condition I am satisfied that the development would have an acceptable impact on neighbouring properties in terms of light, outlook and privacy.

Traffic impact and highway safety

- 6.29 The proposed development would reduce the number of units on site and as such, would be likely to result in a lower level of traffic generation. The proposal would make use of the existing access and the level of parking spaces would increase as a result of the development.
- 6.30 As such, I consider that the proposal would accord with policy H3 of the W&SNP in that it would provide safe and secure access, parking and turning arrangements, and would not severely impact on highway safety. The County Council highways officer has no objection in relation to the level of parking provided. As such, I am also satisfied that the development would accord with policy H5 of the W&SNP, which requires an adequate level of off-street parking provision to meet the future needs a development.
- 6.31 The County Council highways officer raised concerns in relation to the original submission as the application site boundary included highways land and this caused concern in relation to the position of the development up to the highway boundary. The amended plans corrected the application site boundary and no longer includes highway land within it.
- 6.32 The highway officer expressed a preference for the bin and cycle store to be moved back from the highway boundary. Although this amendment has not been forthcoming, the highways team accept the proposed layout and I recommend that an informative is added to any planning permission stating that no part of the development shall overhang or obstruct the highway.
- 6.33 The County highways officer is satisfied that 12 cycle spaces would be appropriate for this development and details of the cycle storage can be agreed by a condition. Other conditions are also recommended by the highways officer to ensure that the access is constructed to specification, that car parking is laid out and retained, and that appropriate drainage details are secured.
- 6.34 Other recommended conditions include the agreement of a Construction Method Statement, to help reduce the disturbance caused by construction activities. A condition to secure a Travel Information Pack will help promote the use of non-car modes of transport. Subject to these conditions, I am satisfied that the development would be acceptable in terms of its highways impacts, in accordance with the relevant sections of policy H3 of the W&SNP, and the other Development Plan policies relevant to highways matters.

Trees and ecology

- 6.35 The council's specialist officers for trees and ecology have raised no concerns in relation to the development. A tree protection condition has been recommended by the

forestry officer and subject to the protection of existing landscape features, I consider the development to be acceptable in this respect.

**Other material considerations**

6.36 The application proposes a combined bin and cycle store and the layout / function of this could be improved. However, this would not be a matter which would warrant refusal of the application.

6.37 Details of hard and soft landscaping could be secured through a condition. Boundary details could also be secured to ensure that an appropriate boundary is provided between the proposed parking area and neighbouring properties.

**7.0 CONCLUSION**

7.1 The application site is in a village setting and the proposal would replace an existing building. The proposed development is acceptable with regards to housing and Green Belt policies. Although reducing the number of affordable units on the site, the development would provide larger units, that are modern in terms of construction. This would provide an improved quality of living for occupiers.

7.2 The proposed development would preserve the setting of the adjacent conservation area and would not have a materially greater impact on neighbouring properties than the current building. The County Council highways officer has raised no objection in relation to parking provision and the development would be acceptable in terms of trees and ecology.

7.3 When considered against the development plan as a whole, the proposal would represent a sustainable form of development, and as such, is recommended for approval.

**8.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

8.1 **To grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Planning permission – three years to implement.**
2. **Development in accordance with approved plans.**
3. **Materials schedule.**
4. **Obscure glazing.**
5. **Cycle parking facilities.**
6. **Existing vehicular access.**
7. **Car parking provision.**
8. **Construction method statement.**
9. **Drainage.**
10. **Travel information pack.**
11. **Tree protection.**
12. **Hard and soft landscaping.**
13. **Details of boundary treatments.**

**Informative – No development to overhang or obstruct highway**

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